



**Implementing the Strategic Action Programme
for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand
(SCS SAP Project)**

Second Meeting of the SCS SAP Steering Committee

30-31 January 2023, Bangkok, Thailand

**PROJECT STATUS AND PROGRESS FROM
INCEPTION TO 2023 AND PLANS FOR 2024 AND
ONWARDS**



INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand (SCS SAP Project) is:

“To assist countries in meeting the targets of the approved Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the marine and coastal environment of the South China Sea (SCS) through implementation of the National Action Plans in support of the SAP, and strengthening regional co-ordination for SCS SAP implementation.”

Participating Countries:	Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam
Implementation Agency:	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Executing Agencies:	United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
Funding Agency:	Global Environment Facility (GEF)
Funding:	15 million USD (with approximately 83 million USD in co-financing)
Web-links:	https://scssap.org

The SCS SAP Steering Committee’s role will be to provide managerial and governance advice to the project, and to guide the Project Coordination Unit (PCU), in the implementation and monitoring of the overall regional project. The SCS SAP Steering Committee will also provide a regional forum for reviewing and resolving national concerns, reviewing and approving annual work plans and budgets, and provide a regional forum for stakeholder participation. At the first meeting of the SCS SAP Steering Committee, the membership of the PSC was reconfirmed and reconstituted, and the terms of reference and meeting procedures were agreed upon by the members of the PSC.

The objectives of this Second Steering Committee Meeting include:

1. Discuss project progress and implementation at regional and national levels
2. Discuss habitats and land-based pollution achievements in implementing the SAP during 2008 – 2021
3. Discuss and adopt regional and national activities for implementation under Components 2 and 3
4. Discuss and adopt the revised workplan and budget

The Steering Committee is composed of two representatives from each participating country, the Chairs of the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) and the Chairs of the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) and UNEP. The SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and UNOPs will support the meeting. Key national team members will be invited to support the IMC and NTWG chairs.

PROJECT STATUS AND PROGRESS FROM INCEPTION TO 2023 AND PLANS FOR 2024 AND ONWARDS

Introduction

The South China Sea is a semi-enclosed sea, which supports a number of unique habitats and ecosystems that are amongst the most biologically diverse shallow water marine ecosystems globally. The richness and productivity of the South China Sea and associated environments are, however, seriously threatened by high population growth, pollution, over harvest and habitat modification, resulting in high rates of habitat loss and impairment of the regenerative capacities of living resources. The socio-economic impacts of environmental deterioration are significant for the economies of this region.

Recognizing that actions were urgently needed to halt degradation of the environment of this marine basin, the countries of the region sought the assistance of UNEP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in preparing a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis of the issues and problems and their societal root causes as the basis for development of a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) which was inter-governmentally adopted in 2008. The SAP established a series of objectives and priority costed actions for coastal habitats, land-based pollution management, and the over-exploitation of fish stocks in the South China Sea.

The SCS SAP project was endorsed by the GEF in November 2016 and began implementation in April 2018 with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) as executing agencies for national and regional activities, respectively. Due to some initial delays on the execution and implementation arrangements of the project, and in spite of the challenges of COVID-19, the Inception Phase was implemented which collectively reviewed, discussed and elaborated, in close consultation with national and regional partners, the national and regional activities, partnerships and co-execution arrangements, workplans and budgets. The Inception Phase ensured that the project is fully in line with recent and current national initiatives and priorities, given the period of time between the SAP adoption in 2008, the GEF endorsement in 2016 and the present.

Project Inception Phase

A Project Inception Team was engaged in April 2020 to work on the preparation and documentation for the SCS-SAP Project inception phase, composed of Dr. Virginie Hart and Mr. Reynaldo Molina. The team proceeded to elaborate the regional and national activities of the project, in close consultation with the implementing and executing agencies together with national and regional partners. However, due to COVID-19 crisis, the coordination of the SCS SAP Inception Phase was done remotely by the team from home. In spite of the challenges of COVID-19, all partners and national teams are able to initiate initial actions.

The Project Inception Team initiated the drafting of the Regional Implementation Report and the National Implementation Reports for each country detailing the information on the execution of regional and national activities, based on the SAP and the SCS SAP project document endorsed by GEF.

The Regional Implementation Report (RIR) details and elaborates all the regional level activities mentioned in the project document endorsed by GEF in 2016 including training and capacity building, assessments

and guidelines, management and coordination, partnerships and collaboration, among others, complete with workplan, activities and budget. The RIR provides the updated regional activities for implementation.

Like the RIR, the National Implementation Report (NIR) details all the national level activities mentioned in the project document including the execution and coordination arrangements in each country. The report is divided into two parts: Part 1 Background and general information, contain sections introducing the project and its components; an overview of key national strategies and policies, relevant initiatives and projects, national reports and publications developed and produced during the SCS project, and key national stakeholders; and national coordination and oversight arrangements for the implementation of this project. Part 2 contains the national actions to be implemented in the participating countries, particularly the detailed information on the components and associated outcomes and outputs to be implemented at site level. This includes the targets and priority sites for mangroves, coral reef, seagrass and wetland including site level information such as location and characteristics, past and current initiatives and project to manage the site, proposed activities, workplans and budgets, and implementation arrangements of each site. A guidance document was prepared providing information and details about the inception phase and how to complete the NIR. The NIR will be the basis for national contracting and in the further development of the detailed overall results framework, together with the RIR.

The First Regional Inception Phase Online Meeting was held on 30 July 2020, with forty-five (45) participants from national lead agencies from Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam as well as implementing and executing agencies, UNEP, UNOPS, SEAFDEC, and the Inception Phase consultants. The meeting was organized to present the project, its arrangements and requirements to the participating countries including discussion on the next steps in terms of nominations to the various project regional and national working bodies and ensure their active contribution towards the further elaboration of the project activities, workplan and budget.

Following the First Inception Phase online meeting held on 30 July 2020, national teams organized their respective internal coordination and consultations with concerned national agencies and institutions to discuss the project and inception phase activities. The national teams are:

- Cambodia: Ministry of Environment
- China: Ministry of Environment and Ecology – South China Institute of Environmental Sciences
- Indonesia: Ministry of Environment and Forestry
- Philippines: Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Biodiversity Management Bureau
- Thailand: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment – Department of Marine and Coastal Resources
- Vietnam: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment – Vietnam Administration of Seas and Islands

The review and confirmation of Specialized Executing Agencies (SEAs) and National Focal Points (NFPs) for mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass, wetlands, land-based pollution and economic valuation components, including the chairs and memberships of the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) and National Technical Working Group (NTWG) were undertaken. The SEAs and NFPs and Chairs of the various national bodies had been initially identified and provided during the project preparation phase in 2016. However, given

the time lapsed, a lot of institutional and staffing changes occurred. Countries were requested to submit a confirmed/updated list of SEAs and NFPs and chairs of IMC and NTWG.

The review and confirmation of priority project sites identified in the SAP and listed in the project document was undertaken. The project sites previously identified in the SAP that was adopted in 2008 may no longer be valid for interventions and may not be aligned with current national priorities and initiatives. Countries were requested to submit a confirmed/updated list of priority project sites. In the selection and confirmation of sites, national teams (except China) were linked up with the Fisheries Refugia Project National Focal Points (NFPs) to consult and discuss the alignment of project sites and activities. The Fisheries Refugia Project is the fisheries component of the SAP. National teams were encouraged to invite the Fisheries Refugia Project and its NFPs in national consultation process and national committee and working group meetings.

All national teams started the development and elaboration of their National Implementation Reports, which are regarded as the national project document. This includes organizing national consultations to facilitate the review and completion of the report such as updating baseline information on relevant new laws and policies, complimentary initiatives and projects, and key stakeholders to be engaged including developing further the national activities and sites, work-plan and budget, and local stakeholders. Most of the national teams requested support in terms of recruitment of consultants to assist in the development and updating of NIRs.

All national teams participated in bilateral meetings organized to guide and provide details of the inception phase activities particularly the development of the NIRs, nominations of focal points and chairs of national project bodies, confirmations of priority project sites and contracting to provide support to national activities. Bilateral meetings were held on 11 September 2020 (China), 21 September 2020 (Cambodia), 23 September 2020 (Philippines), 24 September 2020 (Thailand), and 25 September 2020 (Vietnam and Indonesia), complete with meeting reports and participants lists. Several coordination and consultation meetings were organized to follow-up the discussions and agreements.

In close consultation with UNOPS, draft general Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and Terms of Reference (TOR) were prepared to support the countries in the implementation of the Inception Phase activities. This includes the proposed budget and agency that will be contracted to execute the inception activities. Cambodia's Ministry of Environment has signed the PCA in April 2021 and amended in July 2021 while Philippines and Thailand opted to engage a consultant to support the execution of inception activities. Other participating countries did not avail of the support.

Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for project staff and consultants were developed in close consultation with UNOPS. Three TORs were finalized, advertised and recruited for one regional (Dr. Vo Si Tuan) and two national consultants (Mr. Romeo Trono and Mr. Pituck Jongnarangsin) that will assist the project team and national partners during the inception phase.

Consultations with relevant regional organizations and projects in the region like COBSEA, PEMSEA and SEAFDEC, and the UNEP/GEF Fisheries Refugia Project were undertaken including participation in regional meetings and events. The SCS SAP Project Team and the Fisheries Refugia Project Team worked closely together in terms of identifying and aligning activities that could be supported or jointly executed. The Fisheries Refugia Project is the fisheries component of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP).

A Coordination Plan for Execution detailing the cooperation between UNOPS and SEAFDEC including the execution schemes and responsibilities of both organizations was developed, in close consultation and coordination with UNOPS and SEAFDEC personnel. Several Inter-Agency Coordination Meeting between UNEP, UNOPS and SEAFDEC were organized to discuss project progress and execution.

The Second Inception Phase Online Meeting was held on 4 December 2020, with sixty-five (65) participants from national lead agencies from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam as well as implementing and executing agencies, UNEP, UNOPS, SEAFDEC, the Inception Phase consultants, and regional and national advisors. The meeting was organized to present and discuss the progress so far with regards to the inception phase and agree on the timeline and workplan towards the First Project Steering Committee/Inception Meeting.

The Third Inception Phase Online Meeting was held on 15 March 2021, with forty-three (43) participants from national lead agencies from participating countries. The meeting was organized to discuss and provide guidance to national teams in the development and completion of the NIR.

The First Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting was held on 29-30 June 2021, with fifty-one (51) participants from national lead agencies from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam together with UNEP, UNOPS, SEAFDEC and PCU and its regional and national advisors to present, discuss and adopt project implementation documents such as the Regional Implementation Report, among others.

The SCS SAP Project Inception Workshop was held on 1 July 2021 to present and launch the project and discuss key partnerships, with over 200 participants, including participating country national teams, and other relevant national stakeholders, and key regional and global partners and projects. This signals the end of the inception phase and start of the implementation phase.

A new and updated project website was created and available at <https://scssap.org/>. Key documents included are the 2008 Strategic Action Programme, which is the basis of the current project, and the SCS SAP Project Document including basic information about the project. The new website is still in its early stage and will be updated as the project progresses. The original SCS Project website (<http://www.unepscs.org/>) is still active and maintained, where all documents and reports are available, which the participating countries could use as reference in the implementation of the current SCS SAP Project.

The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) staff recruited, and office established, equipped and functional and hosted by SEAFDEC, the executing agency responsible for regional activities. Project staff recruited were the Project Management Support Specialist-Country Liaison and Coordinator (Mr. Reynaldo Molina) in March 2021 and the Senior Project Manager (Dr. Virginie Hart) in May 2021. The PCU office is located at the SEAFDEC Training Department in Samut Prakarn, Thailand.

Project Implementation Phase

The implementation phase of the SCS SAP commenced following the SCS SAP Inception Workshop in July 2021. With the support of participating countries to finalize detailed activities at the national and regional level and in spite of the challenges of COVID-19, all partners and national teams were able to initiate initial actions.

National teams organized their respective internal coordination and consultations with concerned agencies and institutions to discuss the project and implementation phase activities. This includes the review and confirmation of national focal points of different project bodies including memberships, review and confirmation of intervention sites and targets, review and updating for publication of the following documents: 1) Draft National Implementation Reports, 2) Draft Report on Habitats and Land-based Pollution Achievements in Implementing the SAP at the National Level During 2008 – 2021, and 3) Good practices on habitats, fisheries and land-based pollution management.

Project Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) for national execution in Cambodia, China, and Thailand have been signed in late 2022 and amended in June 2023 to extend the duration of the agreement and activity timelines until June 2024, following the approved extension of the project. This starts the full implementation and execution of national and site level activities by the national implementing partners in Cambodia (Ministry of Environment), China (South China Institute of Environmental Sciences-Ministry of Ecology and Environment) and Thailand (Department of Marine and Coastal Resources-Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment). Activities implemented include the review and assessment of policies and regulations including public hearings and consultations, surveys and mapping including collection of data and baseline information, information, education and awareness campaign including signboards installation and waste collection, habitat management including management plan development, enrichment planting and replanting and working group establishment, training workshops and capacity building activities, coastal cleanups and patrolling, aside from the regular coordination and consultations by implementing partners with stakeholders.

As to the cooperation agreements with the Philippines, Indonesia and Viet Nam, bilateral meetings, calls missions with the national lead agencies of Indonesia (Ministry of Environment and Forestry), Philippines (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) and Vietnam (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment) have been carried out to address issues and concerns on the project execution arrangements including the finalization of PCAs/GSA. The government restructuring due to national election has resulted to change of leaderships and mandates including the agencies that would execute the project, and the internal consultation and coordination process have caused significant delays in the finalization and signing of agreements.

The Philippines PCA is still awaiting the signature by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Follow-up letters and calls have been made including discussion on exploring other execution modalities. The Indonesia Grant Support Agreement (GSA) with the Bogor Agricultural University-Center for Coastal and Marine Resources Studies has been finalized but awaits the finalization and signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UNOPS and Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MOEF), which will serve as an umbrella agreement to implement the project in Indonesia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has completed the review of the draft MOU. It is anticipated that the MOU can be signed in early 2024 paving the way for project implementation in Indonesia. The Viet Nam PCA and the newly assigned national lead agency to coordinate and execute the project, the Vietnam Environment and Marine Science Institute (VEMSI), has been working very actively to complete the internal process of MONRE to get the PCA signed. This is expected to happen in early 2024.

The Project organized country missions together with UNOPS and SEAFDEC on the PCA progress and finalization where the national lead agencies expressed support and commitment to implement the project and finalize and fast track the PCA internal review and consultation process. Administrative and logistical support were provided by SEAFDEC.

Missions and site visits were organized to discuss project progress and concerns with the: Department of Marine and Coastal Resources of Thailand on 16 May 2023 on PCA implementation and amendment, including visit to Koh Si Chang coral reef site on 18-19 May 2023; Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Philippines on 7-8 June 2023 on PCA signing status and issues, including visit to Batangas/Maricaban Strait coral reef site on 9-10 June 2023; Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency of Viet Nam on 12-13 June 2023 on national coordination and execution arrangements and PCA finalization; Ministry of Environment and Forestry and Center for Coastal and Marine Resources Studies-Bogor Agricultural University of Indonesia on 14-15 June 2023 on MOU and GSA status and finalization; and South China Institute of Environmental Sciences (SCIENS) of the Ministry of Environment and Ecology in Guangzhou, China on 2-4 August 2023 on PCA implementation, including visit and meeting with local implementing partners and stakeholders of mangroves and wetlands project sites.

Project staff, regional and national advisors recruited and continued to provide management, technical and scientific support to the project and national teams in developing regional and national level activities for implementation. Local staff were recruited to provide administrative and financial support to the project. A regional consultant was recruited to prepare for the regional scientific and technical committee and regional working group meetings including a national advisor to support development of regional and national activities. Three project staff (Senior Project Manager in May 2021, Project Management Support Specialist-Country Liaison and Coordinator in March 2021, and Scientific Coordinator in November 2021) were recruited by UNOPS, supported by a UNOPS Project Management Support Officer. Two local staff were recruited by SEAFDEC to provide administrative and financial support to the project. In March 2022, Ms. Virgine Hart left the project and was replaced by Mr. Anders Poulsen in May 2023. Courtesy calls and missions have been carried out with the national governments and focal points and local implementing partners and stakeholders in the participating countries. In November 2023, the Project Management Support-Senior Assistant was recruited by UNOPS.

National Coordinators for Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, China and Viet Nam were recruited to provide project management and technical support to the project and national teams in development and implementation of national activities for execution. Contract extensions of all six National Coordinators until June 2024 have been completed to support further development and implementation of cooperation agreements, regional and national activities.

The National Coordinators and PCU have participated and provided presentations and inputs in project coordination and consultation meetings and site visits organized by the project and implementing partners on matters related to execution arrangements and requirements, cooperation framework (MOU) and agreements (PCA and GSA), implementation of workplans, activities and budgets, monitoring and tracking implementation progress including reporting, among others. Bi-weekly National Coordinators meetings with UNOPS and PCU teams were organized and regularized to guide and monitor the project progress and concerns at national level.

The First Regional Working Group Meetings for Mangroves (1 December 2021), Coral Reefs (2 December 2021), Seagrass (3 December 2021) and Wetlands (7 December 2021) were held virtually with national committee chairs and representatives of each working group including national project teams and experts to present and discuss the SAP targets particularly the status of SAP implementation from 2008-2020, and the status and progress of the SCS SAP Project implementation. Across the habitat working groups, it was evident that significant progress had been achieved in SAP implementation over the last decade in terms

of the declaration of sites with protection and conservation status, development and implementation of management plans including restoration in sites, and adoption of policy and legislative reforms, among others.

The Project co-organized with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and MSPglobal Project the virtual dialogue on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand Large Marine Ecosystems on 15 December 2021, with around 70 participants mostly coming from the members and participants of the SCS SAP Regional Working Group meetings and partners.

The First Regional Scientific and Technical Committee Meeting and field trip was organized on 17-19 October 2022 in Bangkok, Thailand, with sixty-three (63) participants from the chairs and staff of the National Technical Working Groups from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, as well as chairs of the different regional working groups and experts including the RSTC members of the Fisheries Refugia Project and National Coordinators, and representatives from UNEP, UNOPS, SEAFDEC and COBSEA. The meeting was organized to present and discuss the SCS SAP outcomes designed in the SAP and revised in the Inception Report, the reports on the achievements in implementing the SAP at the national level during 2008 – 2021 and the good practices on habitat and land - based pollution including plan for publication, and the next steps in implementing regional and national activities under the components 2 and 3.

Back-to-back with the RSTC meeting, the project organized the SCS SAP National Coordinators Meeting on 20 October 2022, the SEAFDEC and PCU Meeting on Project Work Planning and Accomplishment on 20 October 2022, the COBSEA and PCU Meeting on Project Activities for Collaboration on 21 October 2022, all organized in Bangkok, Thailand to review and discuss the project implementation progress and next steps.

The First Regional Working Group on Land-based Pollution Meeting was organized virtually on 13 December 2022, with thirty-two (32) participants from the National Focal Points on land-based pollution and chairs of the National Technical Working Groups from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand, including regional experts. The meeting was organized to review and discuss the SCS Project Outputs and SAP Targets on Land-based Pollution Focal Area including the efforts and achievements in SAP and NAP Implementation, the good practices on Habitat and Land - Based Pollution Management, and the prioritization of Land - Based Pollution activities for project implementation.

The Project organized bilateral meetings and calls with regional organizations, projects and initiatives on possible synergies and collaboration such as the:

- UNEP/GEF/SEAFDEC Fisheries Refugia Project
- UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme on setting up a SCS SAP SGP
- UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC) on tools, guidelines and best practices information and exchange
- Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA)
- ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB)
- UNESCO/GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IWLEARN)
- UNESCO/IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC)
- Reef-World Foundation
- Academic institutions like Thailand's Kasetsart University

The Project participated in various regional and national meetings, conferences, and events such as the:

- 25th Intergovernmental Meeting of the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA)
- 44th SEAFDEC Program Committee Meeting (PCM)
- UN Decade Action Incubator on Coral Reef organized by IOC/WESTPAC
- 5th Meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee of the Fisheries Refugia Project
- FAO GoTFish Stakeholder Consultation
- China Expert Consultation Meeting
- East Asia Summit Workshop on Maritime Cooperation: Technical and Scientific Cooperation Towards Clean Healthy, and Sustainable Oceans
- 45th SEAFDEC Program Committee Meeting (PCM)
- Regional MSP Forum: Western Pacific and Its Adjacent Areas
- 8th Meeting of the Project Steering Committee of the Fisheries Refugia Project
- 22nd Annual Consultative Meeting on Large Marine Ecosystems and Coastal Partners (LME22)
- First Meeting of the COBSEA Working Group on Marine and Coastal Environment

Coordination and consultation between UNOPS and SEAFDEC were organized to discuss and finalize the project cooperation arrangement (Note on Implementation Procedures) for execution, detailing the roles and responsibilities of UNOPS and SEAFDEC as executing agencies to ensure smooth coordination and execution of activities. Inter-Agency Coordination Meetings between UNEP, UNOPS and SEAFDEC were convened.

Per recommendation of the First Project Steering Committee meeting in June 2021, a no-cost project extension to cover the execution delays of the project has been approved by UNEP in February 2023. The revised technical closure will be on 30 June 2024 and the revised financial closure will be on 31 December 2024. The amendment to the Letter of Agreement was proposed by UNEP on 7 February 2023 and countersigned by UNOPS on 2 March 2023.

The implementation of the project was slowed down with the withdrawal of SEAFDEC as the executing agency for regional activities. A termination letter was issued by SEAFDEC Secretary General to UNEP on 16 December 2022 terminating the Project Cooperation Agreement with UNEP for the execution of the SCS SAP Project including its activities and budgets. As a result, regional activities were postponed like the Second Project Steering Committee meeting scheduled in January 2023, which should endorse the revised workplan and budget of the project and the recommendations of the First Regional Scientific and Technical Committee meeting held in October 2022 on the implementation arrangements and proposed activities of Components 2 and 3. Discussions between SEAFDEC and UNEP on the termination procedures and next steps are ongoing.

The withdrawal by SEAFDEC has necessitated discussions to identify new execution arrangements with UNEP and UNOPS to move the project forward. Taking into consideration the arrangements that would have minimal impact on the overall implementation of the project, UNEP and UNOPS have agreed to continue the execution of regional and national activities through UNOPS. This requires the need to: 1) consolidate SEAFDEC and UNOPS budget together, 2) revise the overall workplan and budget to align with the new execution arrangements with UNOPS and new global and regional developments such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and Blue Economy concept, and 3) extend the project until 2026 to cover the implementation delays due to covid pandemic, slow internal coordination and consultation process and government restructuring and leadership changes at national level, and the withdrawal of SEAFDEC.

In close consultation with UNOPS and UNEP, the overall workplan and budget have been revised and finalized including the new execution arrangements and project extension to 2026 for presentation to the Project Steering Committee on 30-31 January 2024. The revised workplan and budget were circulated to PSC members in November 2023 for review and no objection approval prior to the PSC meeting. Once approved, UNEP will initiate the amendment of the Letter of Agreement (LOA) with UNOPS including the transfer of funds for the execution of the whole project.

As part of the revised workplan, Terms of References for seven consultancies have been drafted. The key consultancy will be the updating of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and the Strategic Action Programme (SAP), which will be one of the key milestone outputs from the project. Several meetings and discussions were organised with the TDA/SAP consultant resulting to the TDA/SAP consultancy TOR. Once the revised workplan is approved by the PSC, implementation of the TDA/SAP consultancy as well as other related consultancies will be implemented.

A UN-to-UN agreement with COBSEA has been drafted to implement parts of regional activities under Components 2 and 3. The agreement covers outputs related to Land-based Pollution and regional governance, as well as integration of SCS-SAP work on coastal habitats into the COBSEA regional working group on coastal and marine ecosystems.

Project Plans for 2024 and Onwards

Organize the Second Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting scheduled on 30-31 January 2024 to present, discuss and approve the revised project workplan and budget, the revised project execution arrangement with UNOPS as executing agency, and the second no-cost project extension until December 2026. Once the revised workplan is approved by the PSC, the implementation of the project and activities will be on full swing.

Initiate the amendment and signing process of the Letter of Agreement (LOA) between UNEP and UNOPS on the new workplan and budget and execution arrangements.

Initiate the amendment and signing process of the Project Cooperation Agreement with Cambodia, China, and Thailand to extend the agreement duration and activity timelines to June 2026.

Facilitate the internal review and approval process of the project including finalization and signing of PCA with Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam.

Finalize the Terms of Reference for project staff and consultants in preparation for the recruitment process in early 2024. Initiate contract amendment of National Coordinators.

Finalize and publish the report on habitats and land-based pollution achievements in implementing the SAP at the national level during 2008 – 2021, and the report on good practices on habitats, fisheries, and land-based pollution management.

Prepare for the project participation (special forum) in the UNESCO/IOC WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference in April 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Discuss with UNOPS BSSC and EAPMCO, and Kasetsart University on possible collaboration and hosting of project office and staff. Draft Memorandum of Understanding with UNEP has been prepared and shared with Kasetsart University for review. UNOPS BSSC provided temporary office to project staff.